585 distributes invitations, offers his occupational services in matters of haircutting and shaving, and at the wedding itself, at the time of important rites during the night, holds a lighted torch. The potter supplies the large quantity of earthenware needed for the different [533] rituals as well as for cooking. No marriage ceremony can be performed without the essential instrumental music played by the Madigas. The carpenter has to make the marriage-post, and other wooden fixtures as well, if they are required. The marriage rites require small payments to these occupational castes in the course of the ceremony itself. At the completion of the ceremony, depending on the means of the family, they are paid once again for their labours.

586 587 Divorce and widow re-marriage are allowed in all castes except the Brahmin and the Komti. Divorce or 'driving away the wife' is not very common. In the 380 marriages studied by us there were only 79 cases of desertion and divorce. In all such cases the elders, the village council and the caste council intervene and the parties involved in the dispute have to abide by their decisions.

595 Brahmins do not conduct the re-marriage of widows. Polygyny is permitted among the Hindus; but it is rare. At the time of our investigation there were only seven polygynous Hindu homes in the village.

584 Among the Muslims the standard marriage ritual prescribed by Islam is adhered to with some regional and local variations. Marriage negotiations are initiated by the boy's people, and when they are successful a date for the *nikah* (rites of marriage) is fixed 585 by them in consultation with a Muslim marriage priest. Four days before the actual wedding preliminary rites are started. The ceremony opens with the rite of *manjah* in which the womenfolk of the two sides grind turmeric in their respective homes, and playfully throw turmeric and coloured water on each other in their separate groups. On the second day the groom's people go to the bride's home with gifts for her. These gifts include jewellery, clothes and bangles. The bride is then garlanded by a responsible person from the groom's side; and a little later, with her mother's permission, *missi* (a thick black paste) is applied to her lips and teeth. This symbolizes the actual beginning of the wedding rites. On the third morning, the bride's people (with the exception of her mother) go to the groom's place. They take presents for the bridegroom, and he is garlanded by a younger sister or cousin of

1: Dube E-5 (1951-52) 1955 AW17 Telugu AW17
Muslims

the bride. The girl and the boy are seated opposite each other, 585
but are separated by a screen. The bride's sister or cousin asks the groom to extend his hand towards her so that she may apply *henna* (a perfumed paste) to his index finger. He refuses to do this unless she promises to be his slave. When he does give her his finger, she catches hold of it, and lets go of it only when he promises to be her slave. Later turmeric paste is applied to the bride and she is attired in her bridal clothes. At the appointed time the groom is brought on a horse or in a decorated carriage by his people in a procession. The bridegroom finds the main entrance closed. It is opened by the bride's brothers when small gifts are offered to them. The *kazi*, Muslim priest, solemnizes the marriage by reading the prescribed words of *nikah*. The signature of the bridegroom is obtained on a document which embodies all the terms of the marriage contract, including the *mehar* (alimony) which he will have to pay if he leaves his wife. While this is being done the bride remains inside. Her father and some responsible elders then go to her and say, 'You are being married to X, with a *mehar* fixed at Rs. —. Are you willing to be his wife?' Her consent is necessary; although she often indicates it not by saying 'yes' but by crying. The bridegroom's mother puts a necklace of black beads around the bride's neck, and a nose-ring in her nose. Ceremonies of fun and frolic follow. The two are seated on a decorated bed, but a screen is held between them, and they throw rice at each other. Then the screen is removed and a mirror is placed between the two. The groom is asked to read some passages from the Koran and to see the reflection of his wife's face in the mirror. Later the bride is given away ceremonially by her parents to the head of the bridegroom's family. The procession for going home is formed by the groom's party, and the newly-married couple are taken in a decorated carriage. More rites follow at the bridegroom's house, where the two have to wash each other's feet. During all these days feasting goes on, to which friends and relations are invited. On the final day an elaborate feast is given. Later, in a day or two, the bride is taken back to her parents' home. There the bridegroom's people are received with great courtesy and are given an impressive feast.

Islam permits polygyny, and a man can have up to four wives. 590
In Shamirpet, however, there were only three polygynous Muslim 586
homes in a total Muslim population of 340, at the time of our

RITUAL STRUCTURE

595 investigations. Their social system and usage permit divorce, and
586 clauses pertaining to alimony are embodied in the written marriage contract. In actual practice, in all cases of desertion and 'running away' these conditions are not adhered to very strictly, and compensation when paid is substantially less than the figure mentioned
585 in the contract. As pointed out earlier the marriage rites are conducted by the *kazi*, who is invited from the city for this purpose.

41 *Death.* Both Hindus and Muslims understand the physiological causes of death. It is generally attributed to natural causes, such as disease or old age; but in all cases where the circumstances or manner of death are unusual it is attributed to supernatural factors, such as wrath of gods and ancestor-spirits, witchcraft and black magic.

764 Among all the Hindu castes, the dead children are buried. The Brahmin and the Komti as a rule cremate their dead, except in cases of death from snake-bite and smallpox. Among the other higher castes both cremation and burial are practised. It is usual to cremate the aged as well as the rich and the influential. In the lower castes such as the Sakali, the Mangali and the Erkala, as well as among the untouchable Malas and Madigas, burial is more common. Soon after a death, word is sent round to relations and friends in the village and also in the neighbouring villages. The corpse is washed, clothed and tied on to a wooden or bamboo bier. It is covered with a new cloth, and decorated with flowers. If the family can afford it Madigas are called to play their musical instruments, which they do walking at the head of the procession. The bier is carried by four people on their shoulders. As they proceed slowly towards the graveyard or the cremation ground, people keep on repeating some solemn slogans, such as 'the name of God alone is true' or 'be truthful and your salvation will be assured'. When a person is to be cremated, his or her son, or in the absence of a son a younger brother or some other near kin, carries an earthen pot with fire in it. Midway between the house and the burial ground the bier is placed on the earth for a few minutes' 'rest', and then carried on. Before putting it on the funeral pyre or in the grave, the son, or a near relation of the deceased, goes round the pyre (or grave) three times sprinkling water all around it. The body is then put on the pyre with the bier, or is taken from it and put in the grave. A near kinsman sets fire to the pyre, or

1: Dube E-5 (1951-52) 1955 AW17 Telugu AW17

natural and necessary. Only morons and cripples remain single. Though it is rare for people to renounce their home and property in old age, old men and women excessively attached to material goods come in for a good deal of criticism, and people often remark about them, 'Will they carry their wealth with them to the other world when they die?' It is at this time that their thoughts turn more to religion and to the destiny of their souls in the future life, and it is now that they generally undertake pilgrimages to holy places. In a sense the broad essentials of the philosophy of the *ashramas* can be said to permeate the life and thought of the Hindu villagers. The village Muslims share these social attitudes with their Hindu neighbours. With conversion to Islam they have changed their religious faith, but in the socio-cultural spheres of life they still continue to have more or less the same basic attitudes as the Hindus. In their family ethics and ideals the two groups demonstrate considerable similarity.

To the village people the necessity of both marriage and family is self-evident. It is necessary that the family line should be continued. A male heir must be left. An unmarried person past the marriage age is an object of pity. A couple without a son are unhappy. Childlessness and inability to produce a male child on the part of a woman often lead to a polygynous household. Marriage is regarded as essential among all the castes and social groups in the village. In a community of 2,494 persons, demographic survey reveals the presence of only two single persons—both women. One of these is a deaf-mute; the other has been a victim of epileptic fits from her childhood and has in addition the unenviable reputation of being a thief. For the clean-caste Hindus the continuity of the family line is necessary for a further reason. A male child must make a ceremonial offering of water to the spirits of his deceased parents and ancestors, without which their souls may not have peace. The untouchable castes as well as the semi-tribal groups also have this ritual in a modified form. The Muslims neither have this belief nor any attendant ritual, but they too share with the Hindus the sentiment against childlessness.

1. THE STRUCTURE OF THE FAMILY

The patrilineal and patrilocal elementary or joint family is the normal type of family unit met with in this part of rural India.